



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 2 April 1968



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The President's Daily Brief
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LATE ITEM

The President's
Speech

A 2 April message to subordinates from a provincial committee to the south of Hanoi is the first reaction we have received from inside North Vietnam. The message, whose over-all tone is rather calm, says the President's speech expresses "an embarrassing defeat for the American pirates." It urges recipients to be cautious and to "take preventive measures for each deceitful plot." Party members are exhorted to "expand each activity," particularly "the mission of communications and transportation aimed at realizing the party's strategy."

TOP SECRET - CONTAINS SIGINT AND KEYHOLE MATERIAL

DAILY BRIEF
2 APRIL 1968

1. The President's
Speech

In the flood of public and private comment which is coming in, the following reactions to President Johnson's speech seem noteworthy:

--The Soviets

avoided commenting on it. They will probably study it for some time. Polish Foreign Minister Rapacki told Ambassador Gronouski that he thought the President "had put his hand on the door-knob but has not pushed the door (to negotiations) open." In general, Soviet and East European press commentary has been cautiously critical of the bombing halt and skeptical of the President's announcement of his noncandidacy.

--A French Foreign Ministry official told our embassy that Couve has urgently ordered an analysis of the speech--to include suggestions on what, if anything, Paris should do to get Hanoi to respond. The official said France probably would not comment publicly until De Gaulle's regular Wednesday cabinet meeting, but he personally considers the speech an "important step" and plans to press his viewpoint with Hanoi's man in Paris.

--Hanoi's ambassador in Prague told a Swedish radio correspondent--in uncertain German--that "negotiations can now start." We doubt that his statement is based on any word from home, however. Otherwise, North Vietnamese representatives, in scattered and sometimes explicitly unofficial reactions, have not budged from Hanoi's previous line. There has been nothing from Hanoi itself.

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Outbreaks of Violence in Brazil



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2. South Vietnam

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3. Brazil

Armed students and opposition extremists clashed with security forces in several parts of Brazil last night. Two USIS offices were sacked during the demonstrations, and two demonstrators were killed.

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Even if there are no demonstrations, tensions may build if the Costa e Silva government yields to military pressure for stronger action against the opposition. Costa e Silva reportedly has already decided to arrest the flamboyant oppositionist, Carlos Lacerda. To do so would give Lacerda a resonant courtroom sounding board for his anti-government diatribes.

4. Poland

An undeclared power struggle seems to be going on in the upper reaches of the Polish hierarchy. Gomulka is not being attacked directly at the moment. On the other hand, he is more often than not described merely as the spokesman for an unspecified collective "party leadership." To judge from the government's propaganda, those who favor a hard line toward the recent unrest are currently on top. Gomulka apparently is trying to postpone anything which would bring the struggle to a head in hopes that he can get things back in control in the next few months.

5. Czechoslovakia

Ambassador Beam believes that current trends in Prague are favorable to our interests, and that with low-key help from us and other Western nations, Dubcek has a chance of putting together a successful reform government.

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6. Chile

President Frei is now almost completely isolated politically, and his economic and social reform program is about on the rocks. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] He has lost the parliamentary support he needs to push his anti-inflationary reforms through a resistant Congress. To get anything at all through Congress, he may now acquiesce in demands for higher taxes on the US-owned copper mines.

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7. Saudi Arabia -
Yemen

The Saudis, worried about the Soviet presence in Yemen and fed up with Yemeni royalist bickering, have told the royalists that no more money will be forthcoming unless feuding ends and fighting against the republicans resumes. This is largely a pressure tactic, since the Saudis are too nervous about the Soviets to leave the royalists in the lurch for long.

In any case, the republicans have troubles of their own, and it would not take too much of an effort by the royalists to give the impression that the seesaw in the civil war is tipping back their way.

8. Belgium

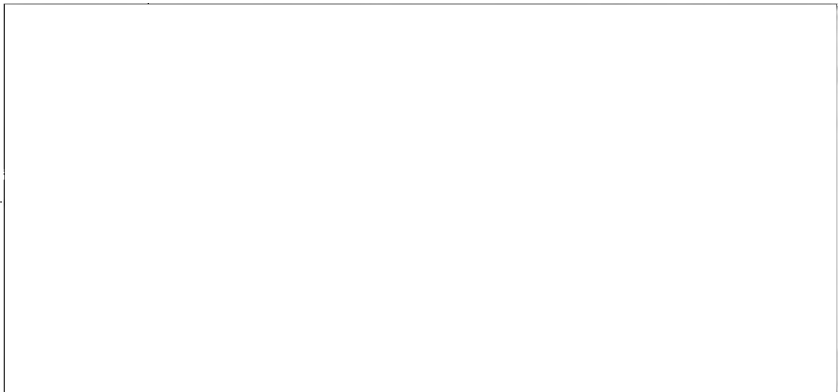
All three major parties lost some ground in Sunday's elections. The two extremist parties--one French-speaking, the other Dutch-speaking--both gained seats, but they still are too small to be worthwhile coalition partners. So the three big parties probably will come up with yet another coalition. There is little chance that this government will last long, much less heal Belgium's deep communal divisions.

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9. Panama

The Supreme Court adjourned yesterday without ruling on the issues surrounding Robles' impeachment. We do not know whether it plans to stall as long as it can, or whether it will rule in the next few days. In any case, Arias and his followers will doubtless try to keep things lively in the streets until the ruling is made. A pro-Arias radio station yesterday made yet another call for a general strike.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] From commu-
nications intelligence the number of Chinese military
personnel in North Vietnam is calculated at up to
50,000, engaged both in construction and antiaircraft
tasks. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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Heavy Truck Traffic Through Laos: Road watch teams near the Mu Gia Pass reported unusually heavy truck traffic moving into Laos during March. These trucks were probably involved in the logistics back-up for the major North Vietnamese troop infiltration now under way. Between 8 and 23 March an average of 53 trucks a day were coming through the pass (this, compared to 41 a day noted in February). Road watch teams farther south on the infiltration corridor have reported an increased supply flow, too.

Intercepted messages also point to an intensive logistical effort. There have been references to a "crash program."

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

Hanoi Continues F-111 Commentary: Hanoi's domestic radio on 31 March carried another long commentary taking credit for destroying two F-111 aircraft. The broadcast said the Pentagon "had to admit" the first F-111 was downed by the Northern armed forces and people, and it cited Western press sources as evidence the second one was lost while conducting a combat mission "over" North Vietnam.

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